

allows those 70 percent of taxpayers who do not itemize ability to give charitable contributions regardless of their itemizing on their tax returns. IRS data shows that if they do, they will increase their charitable giving significantly.

It also allows for tax-free withdrawals from IRAs and Roth IRAs. It also gives incentives for increased charitable contributions by businesses and employers in terms of food from restaurants or computer equipment from other businesses.

This will be a real benefit to our communities. I urge support and passage of this bill.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in very strong opposition to H.R. 7, the Charitable Choice Act of 2001.

This legislation sanctions government-funded discrimination. Passage of this bill would allow religious organizations who receive government funds to hire only those individuals who prescribe to the organization's religious tenets. The bill would also override state and local civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, sex, national origin and sexual orientation.

This bill proposes a major change to the basic American principle of separating church and state. Federal agencies would be given the opportunity to take all of the funding for a program and convert it into vouchers to religious organizations. Religious groups receiving this money would be able to use it for any number of purposes, including proselytizing.

Supporters of this bill claim that more individuals will be helped because more organizations will have access to federal funds. This is simply not the case. H.R. 7 does not provide one additional dollar in federal funding for social programs. In fact, the President's budget actually cuts funding for the very programs that are being touted in this bill.

The tax provisions of this bill are a joke. On the campaign trail, the President wanted to encourage greater charitable giving by providing \$91.7 billion in tax breaks for those who donate. H.R. 7 provides only \$13.3 billion in tax incentives for charitable giving. Why the discrepancy? In their haste to pass a massive tax cut, the President and Republicans abandoned the charitable donation proposals.

I urge all members to vote against this harmful legislation.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 7. As an active member of my local church, I strongly support the good work performed by faith-based charities across this country. But there is a right way and a wrong way to provide government support for those efforts. Unfortunately, this bill represents the wrong way.

H.R. 7 will allow religious organizations to discriminate in hiring on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin and sexual orientation while using federal tax dollars collected from all Americans. This would be a giant step backwards for civil rights. This legislation also subverts First Amendment safeguards by allowing individuals to use vouchers in faith-based programs. Finally, sending federal tax dollars directly to our houses of worship is unconstitutional, and will inevitably lead to government regulation of religion.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the Democratic Alternative to H.R. 7. The Demo-

cratic Substitute will prevent the charitable choice provisions in H.R. 7 from preempting or superseding state or local civil rights laws. The Substitute will also prohibit the use of vouchers and other indirect aid by religious organizations. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Alternative represents the right way to establish partnerships between faith-based organizations and government. We must never use the American people's money to condone discrimination.

Faith- and community-based organizations have always taken the lead in combating the hardships facing families and communities, and I strongly support the work they have done and will continue to do. But H.R. 7 is the wrong way to show our support for these important organizations. I urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 7 and to support the Rangel Substitute.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to submit for the RECORD a list of some of the distinguished organizations that have contacted me to express opposition to H.R. 7. This list is large and broad-based and demonstrates the divisive nature of this bill in its present form. I am hopeful Congress will come together across party lines to pass a common sense compromise to support faith-based charities.

Here is a partial list of organizations that oppose H.R. 7:

- The Baptist Joint Committee
- The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
- The Presbyterian Church, USA
- American Baptist Churches, USA
- The Episcopal Church, USA
- The American Jewish Committee
- The Anti-Defamation League
- The American Association of School Administrators
- Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
- The American Association of University Women
- The American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE)
- The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
- The American Federation of Teachers
- The National Coalition for Public Education
- The Jewish Council on Public Affairs
- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- The National Council of Jewish Women
- The National Education Association (NEA)
- The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO (SEIU)
- The Interfaith Alliance

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, the issue before the House of Representatives today is not whether faith is a positive force or whether churches and synagogues do good work. I think it's safe to assume we all agree that religious organizations play a significant role in providing needed social-welfare programs in every community across the United States.

Religious groups have been doing charity work for years, and they have been doing so without the necessity of the legislation before us today. What is of issue, however, is whether Congress should sanction government-funded discrimination and remove the wall between the church and state.

By permitting religious groups to discriminate in hiring on the basis of

religion, the bill before us today violates the principle of equal protection and endorses taxpayer-funded discrimination. Under the bill, for instance, a religious group can refuse to hire a single mother, a woman using birth control for family planning, or even a person of a different race, if their "status" violates the doctrine of that religion. I can support religious institutions using their private funds to hire a rabbi or a priest to lead their congregations in worship, but I do not condone allowing religious groups to discriminate in hiring when receiving public funds. No American should have to pass a religious test to qualify for a federally-funded job.

Equally disturbing, this legislation does not provide adequate safeguards and essentially obliterates the wall separating church and state, a core principle of our nation for over 200 years. H.R. 7 introduces a new feature into our social-welfare system that allows federal agencies to convert more than \$47 billion in federal funds into vouchers to religious organizations. These vouchers could be used for religious purposes, including the funding of sectarian worship, instruction, and proselytization.

As a strong supporter of faith-based organizations, I cannot support this flawed legislation. The Rangel/Conyers Substitute, which includes anti-discrimination protections and safeguards between church and state received my strong endorsement and vote. This Substitute removed from the base bill the provision that permits indirect aid that could be used for religious purposes and clearly stated that religious programs could not engage in sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization at the same time and place as the government-funded program.

It is my hope the senate makes wiser choices during its consideration of this legislation, and the bill's shortcomings are addressed during conference committee. Hopefully, by that point, the measure will be corrected so that I may lend it my support.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 7, the community Solutions Act, well-intentioned legislation that would undermine two of our nation's most fundamental constitutional principles—equal protection and the separation of church and state. Mr. Speaker, I agree that the federal government should encourage non-profits including religious organizations to help in meeting our nation's social welfare needs, but not at the expense of the constitutional principals that have served this nation so well.

H.R. 7 would broaden the use of federal funds made available to religious groups than is currently permitted and allow such groups to make their religious tenets central in the provision of those services. Specifically, the bill prohibits the federal government, or state and local governments using covered federal funds, from denying religious organizations in the awarding of grants on the basis of the organizations' religious character. The bill expands previously enacted "charitable choice" laws to include eight new programs that relate